

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 AF-10 NEA-10 CIAE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 COME-00 ARA-10
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8399

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY LISBON

USNMR SHAPE

USMISSION USNATO

USCINCEUR

DIA WASHDC

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 08422

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS 1978 -- THE 45 PERCENT MAJORITY

SUMMARY: WHILE HOLDING STEADILY AT ABOUT 45 PERCENT OF VOTING INTENTIONS IN THE POLLS, THE "MAJORITY" CONTINUES THE GOOD FIGHT. SQUABBLING AMONG INDIVIDUAL PARTIES HAS ALMOST CEASED AS THE GISCARDIANS AND GAULLISTS HAVE MOVED BEYOND BACKBITING TO ESTABLISH CLEAR INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES. THE RPR IS ACCENTUATING ITS GAULLIST HERITAGE, WHILE THE UDF IDENTIFIES CLOSELY WITH GISCARD, HIS REFORMIST IDEAS AND HIS DESIRE FOR GOVERNMENT FROM THE CENTER. WHILE CLEARLY BEHIND, THE MAJORITY STILL BELIEVES AT THREE DAYS BEFORE THE FIRST ROUND THAT A COMBINATION OF FACTORS CAN BRING IT FINAL VICTORY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RPR: THE LAST POLL SHOWED THE RPR AT ABOUT 22 PERCENT OF VOTER INTENTIONS. CHIRAC HAS STOPPED (TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE) EVEN MENTIONING GISCARD OR BARRE IN HIS SPEECHES, EMPHASIZING INSTEAD THE RPR'S GAULLIST HERITAGE, FRANCE'S PROGRESS UNDER THE FIFTH REPUBLIC, A NATIONALISTIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AN EXPANSIONARY DOMESTIC FISCAL POLICY TO EXPAND EMPLOYMENT AND INCREASE SOCIAL BENEFITS, SOMEWHAT AUTHORITARIAN MEASURES TO IMPROVE DOMESTIC SECURITY, AND THE CHAOS WHICH HE MAINTAINS WOULD RESULT FROM A VICTORY BY THE LEFT. DURING THE CAMPAIGN, CHIRAC HAS TRAVELED CONSTANTLY, VISITING HUNDREDS OF TOWNS AND SHAKING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF HANDS, TRYING TO BUILD POPULAR CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPORT. THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN MIXED. ACCORDING TO ONE LEADING POLLSTER, THE RPR HAS NOT BEEN GAINING WHERE CHIRAC HITS THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL. ON THE OTHER HAND, CHIRAC HAS CONSISTENTLY DRAWN GOOD CROWDS, GENERATED ENTHUSIASM AMONG HIS SUPPORTERS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, AND PROVIDED A RALLYING POINT FOR THOSE OPPOSED TO, OR SIMPLY AFRAID OF, THE CHANGES PROPOSED BY THE LEFT.

2. THE UDF: WHILE BORN TOO LATE TO HAVE ANY REAL NATIONAL IDENTITY OF ITS OWN, THE UDF, ITSELF OR IN ITS VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS -- PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY, PR, CDS AND RADICAL -- IS PRESENTLY POLLING ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF VOTING INTENTIONS. ITS APPEAL IS BASED ON TWO FACTORS. FIRST, IT IS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH GISCARD AND APPEALS TO THOSE WHO DO NOT LIKE EITHER THE GAULLISTS OR THE LEFT AND LOOK TO THE PRESIDENT AS A WAY OUT. SECOND, THE UDF HAS SOUGHT TO IDENTIFY THE GAULLISTS WITH THE PAST, WHILE HOLDING ITSELF UP AS A NEW FORCE FOR REFORM AND EVOLUTION IN THE SOCIETY. ECONOMICALLY, THE UDF SUPPORTS BARRE'S PROGRAM OF BLOIS AS THE BEST SOLUTION POSSIBLE GIVEN THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. ITS LOCAL APPEAL IS ALSO BASED TO A LARGE EXTENT ON THE IN-

DIVIDUAL CANDIDATES WHO VARY WIDELY IN THEIR PERSONALITIES AND PHILOSOPHY ACCORDING TO THEIR REGIONS.

3. DIVIDED, WE MAY STAND: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE IDENTITIES BY THE TWO MAJORITY GROUPS, MAY PROVIDE THE BREADTH OF APPEAL AND FLEXIBILITY NEEDED TO WIN. THE RPR CLEARLY SEEKS TO APPEAL TO THE TRADITIONAL GAULLIST ELECTORATE. BILLS RANGING FROM ABORTION REFORM TO BARRE'S ECONOMIC PROGRAMS STILL ARE BLAMED ON GISCARD AND BARRE, WHILE FRANCE'S ECONOMIC GROWTH UNDER THE FIFTH REPUBLIC IS RECEIVING MORE ATTENTION AND IS NATUR-

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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ALLY CREDITED TO THE GAULLISTS. THE RPR CAN DRAW ON THE ELECTORATE WHICH HAS SUPPORTED THE POLICIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS. THE UDF HAS LESS TRADITIONAL SUPPORT BUT MORE FLEXIBILITY. ITS CANDIDATES, IN ADDITION TO SUPPORTING GISCARD ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL, WERE CHOSEN FROM A NUMBER OF PARTIES TO BEST MATCH LOCAL CONDITIONS -- PROGRESSIVE IN SOME AREAS, CONSERVATIVE IN OTHERS. IN AN ELECTION WHICH COULD TURN ON THE LAST MINUTE DECISION OF TWO OR THREE PERCENT OF THE CENTER VOTE, THE UDF, THROUGH A VARIETY OF CANDIDATES, HOPES ITS APPEAL AMOUNTS TO A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE PS.

4. A COMBINATION OF FACTORS: WHILE THE LEFT CLEARLY LEADS IN THE POLLS. THE MAJORITY STILL HOPES TO WIN DUE TO A COMBINATION OF FACTORS:

- IN SPITE OF ITS APPEAL AS A FORCE FOR NEEDED CHANGE. THE LEFT HAS LOST SOME CREDIBILITY AS AN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT DUE TO ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS.
- THE ATTACKS OF MARCHAIS ON MITTERRAND AND THE SOCIALISTS HAVE ALIENATED A CERTAIN SEGMENT OF THE SOCIALIST ELECTORATE FROM THE COMMUNIST CANDIDATES, AND VICE-VERSA. THIS COULD LEAD TO ABSTENTIONS AND VOTE SWITCHES ON THE SECOND ROUND WHICH WOULD WORK TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE MAJORITY.
- 1-THERE IS A CONSERVATISM IN THE FRENCH ELECTORATE WHICH WHILE DESIRING CHALLENGE, DOES NOT LIKE INSTABILITY. UNLESS THE LEFT CAN PROVIDE AN APPEARANCE OF UNITY BY THE FINAL ROUND.

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THE MAJORITY WILL HAVE A GOOD ISSUE BETWEEN THE TWO ROUNDS.

--THE APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS IN THE POLLS BETWEEN THE FRENCH VOTER'S INTENT TO VOTE LEFT AND HIS GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH HIS SOCIETY REFLECTS A DESIRE FOR BOTH NEEDED REFORMS AND PRESERVATION OF THE LIBERAL SYSTEM.

--THE POLEMICS IN THE MAJORITY HAVE BEEN MUTED AND SECOND ROUND TRANSFERS OF VOTES SHOULD BE VERY GOOD. ESPECIALLY COMPARED WITH THE LEFT.

--THE PRESIDENT IS BEING URGED BY MAJORITY LEADERS TO COME OUT SOON IN A STRONG SPEECH AGAINST THE LEFT. GISCARD HAS ALREADY USED SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES TO REITERATE THE THEMES OF HIS VERDUN-SUR-LE-DOUBS SPEECH ON THE "RIGHT CHOICE": FOR INSTANCE "OUR ECONOMY CANNOT SUSTAIN ALL OF THESE ELECTORAL PROMISES....I MUST MAKE THIS WARNING SO THAT FRENCHMEN CANNOT SAY THEY WERE MISLED."

5. CONCLUSIONS: ACCORDING TO THE POLLS, AS WELL AS COMMENTS BY FRENCHMEN TO EMBASSY AND CONSULAR PERSONNEL THROUGHOUT FRANCE, THE LEFT IS IN A GOOD POSITION TO WIN. THE MAJORITY, OFFERING TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE, HAS A SEVERE HANDICAP BUT IS FINALLY MAKING A CONCERTED EFFORT. ACCORDING TO SOME MAJORITY PEOPLE, THEIR HOPE RESTS ON LIMITING THE LEFT'S PERCENTAGE LEAD ON THE FIRST ROUND AND CONCENTRATING THEIR STRONG CARDS ON THE SECOND ROUND. IF THE LEFT MAKES A SUFFICIENTLY STRONG SHOWING ON THE FIRST ROUND, THE COMMUNISTS (SAY MAJORITY EXPERTS) WILL BE FORCED TOWARD COOPERATION ON THE SECOND ROUND, UNDECIDED VOTERS WILL TEND TO GO WITH THE LIKELY WINNERS, AND THE LEFT IS IN. BUT IF THE RESULTS ARE CLOSER, THE PCF MAY NOT BE SO MOTIVATED AND LEFT UNITY COULD SUFFER (FOR WHATEVER REASONS); WITH THE FRENCH VOTERS' TENDENCY TO VOTE MORE CONSERVATIVELY ON THE SECOND ROUND, THE

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MAJORITY MAY SQUEAK THROUGH.
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Message Attributes

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